

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 02720 01 OF 02 181939Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01  
SIL-01 LAB-04 EB-08 /072 W  
-----182026 099387 /45

R 181656Z FEB 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2875  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY MADRID  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 2720

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, IT  
SUBJECT: THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY: TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE  
STEP BACK?

SUMMARY. A PERCEPTIBLY TOUGHER LINE BY THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) LEADERSHIP IN RECENT WEEKS HAS LED SOME OBSERVERS TO QUESTION WHETHER THE PARTY HASN'T TAKEN TWO STEPS FORWARD AND ONE STEP BACK. WE BELIEVE THAT THE LATEST TREND REFLECTS THE SERIOUS DILEMMA WHICH THE PARTY FACES IN ATTEMPTING TO APPEAL ESSENTIALLY TO TWO WIDELY DIVERGENT INTEREST GROUPS. GIVEN THE FORCES AT PLAY WHICH INFLUENCE THE DIRECTION OF THE PCI, WE ANTICIPATE A CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT TACTICS AS THE PARTY SEEKS TO REGAIN THE POLITICAL OFFENSIVE. END SUMMARY.

1. PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS BY PCI LEADERS AND BY PCI-CONTROLLED ORGANS SUGGEST THAT THE PARTY LINE ON A NUMBER OF IDEOLOGICALLY RELATED ISSUES HAS TOUGHENED SUBSTANTIALLY. LOCAL OBSERVERS ARE FOLLOWING THIS TREND CAREFULLY, AND SOME ARE  
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PAGE 02 ROME 02720 01 OF 02 181939Z

SUGGESTING THAT AFTER TAKING TWO STEPS FORWARD THE PCI IS BEATING A CERTAIN MEASURE OF RETREAT AND TAKING AT LEAST ONE STEP BACK.

2. THE EVIDENCE. IN REVIEWING THE RECORD OF THE PAST MONTH, WE FIND NUMEROUS EXPAMPLES OF A TOUGHENING PCI LINE. AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE ARE BERLINGUER'S SPEECH AT MILAN (ROME 1725 NOTAL), BERLINGUER'S COMMENTS DURING A TELEVISION INTERVIEW

ON FEBRUARY 10 DISAGREEING WITH CARILLO'S NEGATIVE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF THE SOVIET UNION, AN ARTICLE IN CORRIERE DELLA SERA FEBRUARY 12 BY PCI LEADER AMENDOLA (CONSIDERED TO BE AMONG THE "SOFTER" MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP) AND THE FAILURE OF THE PCI TO INFLUENCE THE LABOR UNION TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON THE SCALA MOBILE (WAGE INDEXATION DURING THE RECENT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE NATION'S MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION.

3. THE CAUSES. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, THE CONVERGENCE OF A SERIES OF EVENTS AND FACTORS HAS HEAVILY INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS TAKING PLACE. AT THE VERY HEART OF THE PROBLEM IS THE DILEMMA WHICH THE PARTY FACES IN ATTEMPTING TO APPEAL TO ESSENTIALLY TWO WIDELY DIVERGENT INTEREST GROUPS, ON THE ONE HAND THE WORKING CLASS OF ITALIAN SOCIETY WHICH HAS BEEN THE TRADITIONAL BASE FOR PCI SUPPORT AND ON THE OTHER HAND MIDDLE CLASS ELEMENTS WHOSE ATTRACTION TO THE PARTY ACCOUNTED FOR A MAJOR PORTION OF THE PCI'S SURGE IN THE ELECTIONS OF 1975 AND 1976. AS THE PARTY POINTED MORE AND MORE TO THE MIDDLE CLASS IN THE HOPES OF GAINING EVEN MORE "CONVERTS" AT A LATER POINT IN TIME, IT APPARENTLY FOUND ITSELF GETTING INCREASINGLY OUT OF STEP WITH THE THINKING OF ITS ESSENTIALLY HARD LINING BASE WHICH HAS A SIZEABLE AMOUNT OF PRO-SCOVET SYMPATHY. OTHER FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PRESSURES ON THE PCI ARE:

- AN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL LOOK AT THE PARTY BY JOURNALISTS AND OTHER PUBLIC OPINION MOLDERS AS THE PCI MOVES CLOSER TO A DIRECT SHARE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COUNTRY.
- THE RESURGENCE OF DISSENT IN THE SOVIET UNION AND EAST EUROPE OBLIGING THE PCI TO ENGAGE IN PUBLIC POLEMICS WHICH IT WOULD RATHER AVOID, PARTICULARLY AS THE PARTY IS CHALLENGED TO SPEAK OUT ON CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ROME 02720 01 OF 02 181939Z

THE IMPERFECTIONS OF SOCIALIST SOCIETIES IN EASTERN EUROPE.

- A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) PARTY WHICH SEES ITS FACTIONS MORE UNITED THAN IN YEARS ON THE SINGLE ISSUE OF REFUSAL TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY DIRECTLY WITH THE COMMUNISTS. AT THE SAME TIME THERE APPEARS TO BE A GROWING UPSURGE IN DC SPIRIT RESULTING FROM THE PARTY'S RECOVERY IN LAST JUNE'S ELECTIONS AND A RECORD OF BUSINESS-LIKE PERFORMANCE BY THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT.

- CONCERN BY THE PCI THAT AT LEAST SOME SOCIALISTS DESIRE TO CHANGE THE EXISTING GOVERNING FORMULA AND ARE CONSIDERING A RETURN TO GOVERNMENT WITH THE DC LEADING TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PCI WOULD BE OBLIGED TO RETURN TO THE OPPOSITION.

- PRESSURE TACTICS FROM THE SOVIETS (ITALIAN PUBLIC APPEARANCES OF LITERATURNAYA GAZETA EDITOR CHAKOVSKIY AND POSSIBLY THE RECENT MOSCOW MEETING BETWEEN CPSU SECRETARY PONOMAREV AND PCI SECRETARY CERVETTI) DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE PCI LEADERSHIP THAT THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL SYMPATHY AT THE BASE OF THE PARTY FOR THE USSR.

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PAGE 01 ROME 02720 02 OF 02 181955Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 2720

5. THE RESPONSE. THE CONVERGING PRESSURES HAVE DETERMINED THE EVOLUTION WHICH PCI TACTICS ARE NOW TAKING. ACCORDINGLY, IT IS NOT BY COINCIDENCE THAT BERLINGUER DELIVERED A SHARPLY-WORDED IDEOLOGICAL SPEECH IN MILAN ON JANUARY 26 PRECISELY IN AN AREA WHERE THE PCI IS APPARENTLY EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IN ITS PRESENT MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN. NOR IS IT STRANGE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT BERLINGUER IN THAT SPEECH SKIRTED THE DISSIDENT QUESTION IN EASTERN EUROPE, PRAISED DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM, LABELED THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA THE GREATEST SINGLE EVENT OF THE CENTURY, WARNED THE OTHER PARTIES NOT TO FORCE THE PCI BACK INTO OPPOSITION AND STATED FLATLY THAT THE PCI WOULD NOT BE THE "CHAMPIONS OF CAPITALISM." (IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT PRAVDA CHOSE TO PRINT THE BULK OF BERLINGUER'S SPEECH EARLY IN FEBRUARY.) ON THE HEELS OF BERLINGUER'S SPEECH, VETERAN PCI LEADER GIORGIO AMENDOLA WAS GIVEN THE TASK OF RESPONDING TO AN EDITORIAL IN CORRIERE DELLA SERA BY SENIOR COMMENTATOR RONCHEY SAYING THAT THE COUNTRY SHOULD WAIT FOR FURTHER EVOLUTIONS IN PCI POLICIES BEFORE ACCEPTING IT AS A TRULY DEMOCRATIC PARTY COMMITTED TO THE PRESERVATION OF PLURALISM. AMENDOLA'S RESPONSE  
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PAGE 02 ROME 02720 02 OF 02 181955Z

SUGGESTED THAT THOSE WHO ARE WAITING FOR THE PARTY TO CHANGE

ITS CHARACTER WILL DO SO IN VAIN. REFERRING TO THE CHANGE IN COURSE OF THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN 1959, AMENDOLA SAID THE PCI WILL NOT GO TO BAD GODESBERG. AND FINALLY, IT IS WORTH NOTING THE APPARENT RELUCTANCE OF THE PCI TO PUSH THE UNIONS BEYOND THE BREAKING POINT TO MAKE KEY CONCESSIONS DURING RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION.

6. COMMENT. THE PCI LEADERSHIP'S ACTIONS IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS LEAD US TO CONCLUDE THAT THE PARTY IS CURRENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION IN WHICH IT NOW FINDS ITSELF. WHILE IT WOULD BE INCORRECT TO LABEL THE CURRENT PCI DIFFICULTIES A SETBACK FOR THE PARTY'S FUTURE FORTUNES, THE PCI HAS NEVERTHELESS ARRIVED AT A CRITICAL CROSSROAD. NOW MORE THAN EVER, BERLINGUER AND HIS FOLLOWERS MUST SHOW THAT THEIR TACTICS ARE SUCCEEDING IN BRINGING THE PCI CLOSER TO A DIRECT SHARE IN THE GOVERNING OF THE NATION. (EITHER A LENGTHY EXISTENCE OF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT OR A RETURN TO THE OPPOSITION COULD PRODUCE MAJOR TENSIONS WITHIN THE PARTY.) THE PRESENT TOUGH LINE DOES, HOWEVER, CARRY RISKS FOR THE PARTY AS IT SUBJECTS IT TO INCREASING DEMANDS FOR CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING ITS COMMITMENTS TO DEMOCRACY AND PLURALISM. IN RECENT YEARS THE SINGLE FACTOR UNITING THE VARYING INTEREST GROUPS SUPPORTING THE PCI HAS BEEN A "NO" TO YEARS OF DC HEGEMONY. TO THE EXTENT THAT THE ANDREOTTI OR OTHER DC LED GOVERNMENT CAN PROVE THE DC CAPABLE OF PROVIDING THE NATION WITH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, A PCI WHICH APPEARS TO BE FAVORING ITS WORKING CLASS BASE WILL ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY IN CONSOLIDATING AND ADDING TO ITS SUPPORT AMONG THE ALL-IMPORTANT MIDDLE CLASS.

7. WE BELIEVE THAT THE PCI'S NEXT MOVE WILL BE TO PUSH FOR A NEW GOVERNMENT IN WHICH IT WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY (BUT NOT IN GOVERNMENT) ON THE BASIS OF A PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD WORKED OUT BETWEEN THE PARTIES OF THE SO-CALLED CONSTITUTIONAL ARC. SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD TEMPORARILY SATISFY BOTH ELEMENTS OF ITS ELECTORATE. HOWEVER, A PCI EFFORT TO WORK SUCH A CHANGE IN THE GOVERNING FORMULA IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO HAVE

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PAGE 03 ROME 02720 02 OF 02 181955Z

SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS ON THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE BECAUSE ALL PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE DC WOULD NOT ACCEPT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE DYNAMICS OF THE PCI'S OWN INTERNAL PROBLEMS WILL TEND TO PUSH IT TOWARD A SHOWDOWN WHICH COULD, IF BOTH THE DC AND PCI REMAIN FIRM, LEAD TO NEW PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THIS SUMMER, A RESULT WHICH NEITHER PARTY WANTS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, SUCH A CRISIS WOULD PROBABLY ALSO COMPLICATE ITALY'S FRAGILE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM AT PRECISELY THE TIME WHEN CONFIDENCE BASED ON POLITICAL STABILITY WILL BE MOST ESSENTIAL.

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## Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009